United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Co-Chairmen of Yugoslav Conference welcome decision of United States Government to take active role in former Yugoslavia and to back its political commitment with readiness to enforce comprehensive settlement.

+ Security Council, in presidential statement, this evening condemns unjustifiable detention of Romanian vessels on the Danube by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Says such "retaliatory measures" against a State enforcing United Nations sanctions are "wholly unacceptable".

+ In Cambodia, unknown gunmen fire at United Nations Communications Centre in Siem Reap; although no one is hurt, incident is being regarded with "utmost seriousness", says UNTAC spokesman.

+ Special Rapporteur on human rights in former Yugoslavia expresses his profound indignation over rape of women and children in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

+ Head of United Nations Children's Fund urges agency's Executive Board to accept proposals offered by City of New York to retain the agency's headquarters in Manhattan.

+ Food supply for former Yugoslavia "still critical" says World Food Programme.

+ World Food Programme appoints Jane Jopling of United Kingdom as new Director of New York Office.

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The Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia, Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, have welcomed the decision of the United States Government to take an active role in the former Yugoslavia and to back its political commitment with the readiness to enforce a comprehensive settlement.

(more)

For information media--not an official record

In a statement read out late this afternoon following the United States announcement of the appointment of Reginald Bartholomew as that Government's special envoy to the international talks on the former Yugoslavia, Fred Eckhard, spokesman for the Co-Chairmen, said that they both know and respect the new United States envoy. He said Mr. Vance had worked with the Ambassador in a warm and close relationship over many years. Lord Owen met Ambassador Bartholomew when he briefed North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ambassadors a couple of months ago in Brussels.

Mr. Eckhard went on to say that the Co-Chairmen would go out of their way to make available to the United States envoy all the information at their disposal and that they were ready to see him whenever he wished. Meanwhile, he said, they would continue to keep the pressure on for an early agreement on a comprehensive peace settlement in the context of the discussions already under way in the Security Council.

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The Security Council has condemned the unjustifiable detention of Romanian vessels on the Danube by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and has called such "retaliatory measures" wholly unacceptable. This follows reports that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has detained Romanian vessels, and threatened to detain more, if Romania does not allow the passage of Yugoslav vessels on the Danube.

In a statement read out to the press following Council consultations this evening, Council President Ahmed Snoussi (Morocco) said it was "wholly unacceptable" for the Yugoslav authorities to take retaliatory measures in response to action by a State fulfilling its obligations under the United Nations Charter. The Council demanded that the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia immediately release the Romanian vessels they had "unjustifiably" detained and desist from further "unlawful" detentions.

The Council said it had learned that Yugoslavia had informed the Committee established by the Council to monitor States' compliance with the sanctions against that Republic, that the detained Romanian vessels would be released without further delay. However, the Chargé d'affaires of Romania had told the Committee that that had not yet happened.

The Council recalled its statement of 28 January 1993 urging States to enforce mandatory Security Council resolutions, with particular reference to Yugoslav vessels attempting to violate the embargo by way of the Danube. It commended the Romanian Government for the action it has taken to enforce the embargo and reaffirmed once again its full support for "vigorous enforcement" of the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

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In Cambodia, a group of 20 to 30 gunmen wearing unidentifiable uniforms and armed with grenades, rockets and small arms had begun firing indiscriminately this morning in Siem Reap City, according to a spokesman for the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC).

Some rounds had gone through the United Nations Communications Centre where five Australian Signals men were staying, and one soldier had returned fire. There were no casualties, but the incident was being regarded with the "utmost seriousness", he said.

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi, has described the voter registration process in the country as a true "Cambodian success story". According to the UNTAC spokesman, Mr. Akashi has said that some 4.7 million voters have so far been registered and most of the 300,000 returnees have been given a chance to register. In addition, over 36,000 refugees have been listed in the camps in Thailand and will be issued registration cards on their return to Cambodia. Mr. Akashi also expressed pleasure at the large number of political parties -- a total of 20 -- that have applied for registration.

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The Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in former Yugoslavia, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, has expressed his profound indignation over the rape of women and children in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In a statement to the forty-ninth session of the Commission on Humam Rights currently under way in Geneva, he said he was disturbed by the extent of the phenonenon and called it "a highly cruel and degrading practice which bears upon the most vulnerable elements in society".

The Canadian representative, Anne Park, also highlighted the issue saying that evidence that had been brought to light recently had confirmed that Muslim women in Bosnia were enduring a barbaric campaign of systematic rape. She said no issue was more compelling or urgent for the Commission than that of the sexual violence being endured by thousands of women, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

She called for an investigation of the matter by a special rapporteur or a team of experts.

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James P. Grant, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), has urged the agency's Executive Board to accept proposals offered by the City of New York to retain UNICEF's headquarters in Manhattan.

Addressing the Board as it began its organizational session for the year, Mr. Grant said that although moving upstate to New Rochelle, New York, would

be cheaper, there were more advantages in remaining in New York City. The Executive Board is expected to act on the proposal regarding the location of UNICEF's headquarters during its substantive session in April.

On the question of the agency's finances, Mr. Grant said that last year, UNICEF's income had topped $900 million for the first time -- $74 million more than the medium-term projection. The Fund's general resources income was $525 million -- $7 million over the medium-term projection.

Mr. Grant drew attention to the continuing recession in the industrialized countries, noting that it had resulted in the reduction of those countries' contributions to UNICEF and other United Nations agencies. He referred in particular to the "significant cutbacks" in the contributions of the Nordic countries, which posed a serious problem for UNICEF, he said.

Turning his attention to the work of the Organization, Mr. Grant said the United Nations operations in Somalia presented new responsibilities and challenges to the organizations within the United Nations system, including UNICEF. He welcomed the military operation in Somalia which would involve the massive movement of up to 300,000 troops to that country to support the work of relief agencies.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) announced yesterday in Rome that the food supply situation in the republics of the former Yugoslavia remained critical, despite the positive response of donors for relief efforts already under way.

The agency said that nearly 90 per cent of the food requirements for the period of January to March had been pledged. However, there were no reserves of food stock in case of unexpected delays or other contingencies and little food had yet been pledged for the food requirements for the period April to December.

According to WFP, the food situation had remained under control due to carry-overs from earlier pledges and late deliveries. Now, the agency had asked donors to ship the food for the rest of the year in advance so that the food supply could be guaranteed.

In the former Yugoslavia, WFP operates from established offices in Zagreb, Belgrade and Split and mobilizes, in coordination with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a pipeline of food to the estimated 3 million refugees and displaced persons.

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The Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), Catherine Bertini, has appointed Jane Jopling of the United Kingdom as Director of the Programme's New York Office.

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As Director, Ms. Jopling will be responsible for managing WFP relations and liaison with the United Nations Secretariat and the New York-based United Nations agencies. She will work to integrate food aid plans into United Nations development and humanitarian activities. In addition, she will maintain contacts with government authorities in Washington, D.C. and Ottawa; she will also be the liaison with non-governmental organizations and the media.

From 1988 until the end of 1992, Ms. Jopling was a Director in the Executive Office of the United Nations Secretary-General, and dealt with economic, social and humanitarian issues.

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